

# **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council**

**June 18, 2002  
Marathon Garden Center**

## **Final Minutes**

### **Members Present**

Wayne Blevins	Nancy Klingener
Thomas Davidson	Duncan Mathewson
Fran Decker	Martin Moe
Todd Firm	Ken Nedimyer
Richard Grathwohl	George Neugent
Debra Harrison	Anita Schwessinger
David Hawtof	Deborah Shaw
Don Kincaid	

### **Alternates Present**

Greg DiDomenico  
Jerome Lorenz

### **Call to Order**

Chair Neugent called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

### **Approval of Minutes/Adoption of Agenda**

On Motion by Thomas Davidson, seconded by Anita Schwessinger, the Minutes of the April 16, 2002 meeting were adopted as presented. The agenda for today's meeting was adopted as presented.

### **Approval and signature of letter from SAC to Nora Williams**

Chair Neugent circulated a letter for signature to Council members, upon receiving unanimous approval, to Nora Williams, in recognition of her years of service to both the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council and the Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee.

### **Setting SAC Goals and Priorities – Billy Causey (NOAA)**

Mr. Causey thanked Council members for the many issues addressed during this term, including the sponging issue, enforcement, vessel operator licensing, personal watercraft, the Dry Tortugas Ecological Reserve and Diadema restoration. He indicated future issues to be addressed by the Council and prioritized at the August 20, 2002 meeting, including water quality issues, and the number of agency, not citizen representatives on the Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee. After some concerns were expressed, it was agreed to place mosquito control on the August agenda. He addressed concerns regarding the testing of the detectability of inert substances released over open water by the U.S. Army. Following discussion, it was agreed that the subject of

additional reserves and restructuring of existing reserves can be discussed at the August meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (NOAA)**

Mr. Causey presented the attached report, saying that this will be his last verbal report. He noted that two of the three babies expected by Sanctuary staff are doing well and the birth of the third is imminent. He said that there are two good candidates for the Boating Representative and that he wishes to keep all the present members of the Advisory Council on board. The Five Year Review of the Management Plan is near completion, and will be ready for the Governor and Cabinet in August. In Washington D.C. between June 4-7, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation hosted, with the Ocean Caucus, a weeklong event drawing attention to coral reefs.

### **Update on the Spiegel Grove – LCDR Dave Score (NOAA)**

LCDR Score gave an update on the status and condition of the wreck as being stable and anchored with no further plans to adjust its position. He said that the oil sheen appears to be gear case oil coming from an undiscovered source and is naturally dissipating. He answered a variety of questions concerning biological monitoring, corrosion and encrustation, and was commended by Council members for the lack of injury and loss of life in the sinking process.

Mr. Causey noted that the No Discharge Zone Rule comes into effect this week, and that restoration of the Wellwood grounding site at Molasses reef is being complicated by bad weather and equipment vandalism. He reported that Geoff Gray, a state underwater archaeologist, is the new Manager of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve. He also reported that final environmental assessments are taking place for the Dr. Nancy Foster Environmental Center, and Steve Baumgartner is already installing docks for 15 boats, including the 82 ft. vessels.

### **Florida Department of Environmental Protection Report – Kacky Andrews (FDEP)**

Ms. Andrews presented the attached report. She noted that House Boat Row is finally gone, and that as of June 19, 2002, no discharge from any marine sanitation device is allowed within state waters of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

### **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee Report – John Hunt (FMRI)**

Mr. Hunt reported that the new sponge harvesting regulations take effect on July 1, 2002, and that he and Mark Butler of Old Dominion University will be conducting a survey of hard bottom communities under the NOAA Coastal Ocean Program using standard fisheries measurements that will take two years to generate appropriate data. Mr. Blevins commended him.

### **Sanctuary Enforcement Report – Captain Jayson Horadam (FWC)**

Capt. Horadam gave the attached Power Point presentation providing an update on additional enforcement personnel and vessel assignments, and listed new technology and new equipment being employed by enforcement officers. He observed that the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission has adopted the motto Patrol, Protect, Preserve and detailed some recent successes in law enforcement. He introduced Lt. Joe Scarpo, captain of the Point Monroe, and Sanctuary enforcement officers Lt. Bill Burns, and Officers David Archie, Bill Green and Kevin Mehegan.

### **Environmental Hero Award**

Billy Causey and Kacky Andrews presented Fran Ford of Key West with the 2002 Environmental Hero award, chosen by Admiral Lautenbacher, for a lifetime of dedication to environmental protection. Deborah Shaw contributed a personal perspective to the accolade.

### **Tortugas Ecological Reserve Anniversary Update**

#### **Research and Monitoring – Brian Keller (NOAA)**

Dr. Keller outlined studies permitted by Sanctuary staff in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve, detailed in the attached handout. He indicated that monitoring to determine reserve effectiveness is being undertaken by Florida Institute of Oceanography under the SEAKeys program, and that since 1995 Ron Jones and Joe Boyer of FIU have been conducting water quality studies. Seagrasses cover 80% of the Sanctuary, and as the dominant ecosystem are being monitored as well as other benthic communities, including coral diseases and coral bleaching events. He concluded by noting that after only one year of implementation there is still only anecdotal data available on fish populations in the Reserve.

John Hunt observed that lobster size has increased in Tortugas National Park since the implementation of a lower bag limit and that larger males are causing larger females to carry eggs again, increasing productivity. George Neugent asked if Doug Gregory's project is still funded and Mr. Causey said that it is not this year. Ms. Shaw said that the research is important and that a potential source of funding is the Sanctuary Friends of the Florida Keys.

#### **Mooring Buoys and Permitting – Steve Baumgartner (NOAA)**

Mr. Baumgartner characterized the methods for developing mooring buoy sites in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve during a week-long dive expedition, with input from scientists and charter boat captains as well as Sanctuary staff. He described the kinds of buoys deployed and method of installation, and noted that sites are categorized by diving difficulty. They are listed on the Sanctuary website with GPS numbers and information on how they work.

#### **Dry Tortugas National Park – Bob Howard (NPS)**

Mr. Howard described the Tortugas historically as both a ship trap and a safe haven. He outlined recent developments, including the designation of Fort Jefferson as a National Monument in 1935 and that Dry Tortugas National Park is encircled by the Florida Keys

National Marine Sanctuary, which abuts Everglades National Park. He mentioned the four principal resources of the Park – Fort Jefferson, submerged cultural resources, the marine ecosystem and the terrestrial ecosystem as a unique breeding ground for marine birds and turtles. It is also a flyway for migrating songbirds. He mentioned legislation, policy and management objectives concerned with the Park. Questions concerned the role of the Sanctuary Advisory Council Tortugas Working Group in revising the management plan; rules and regulations in the Park, and the effects of Everglades restoration on the Florida Keys. Ms. Harrison requested a formal commitment on the part of the National Park Service towards Tortugas National Park and asked that the message be conveyed to the Secretary of the Interior. Ms. Andrews indicated that the State needs to work more closely with the Federal Government, and it was agreed by Council members to defer a recommendation until a later meeting.

### **Tortugas South ER Survey and Multibeam Mapping – Doug Weaver (USGS and University of Florida)**

Mr. Weaver gave the attached Power Point presentation. He acknowledged the contributions made to the project by other scientists and institutions, specifically G.P. Schmahl of Flower Gardens Bank National Marine Sanctuary, D. Naar and Brian Donahue of the University of South Florida Dept. of Marine Science; K. Rademacher and Mark Fonseca of NMFS, and Laddie Akins of REEF, who all participated in the FKNMS Sustainable Seas Expedition, 2002. He focused on Miller’s Ledge and Riley’s Hump, detailing the mapping process and the benthic community surveys conducted by remotely operated vehicle (ROV). There is lower biodiversity here on this Pleistocene platform that drops from 90 ft at Riley’s Hump to 450 ft at Miller’s Ledge, although there are a wide variety of habitats, and the area serves as a spawning ground for large predatory fish, including five species of commercial snapper. The Expedition has given insight into deep reef fish community structure, which is virtually unknown, in addition to describing a species new to science, the Goldface Puffer, *Canthigaster Jamestyleri*. REEF is conducting before-and-after closure surveys of fish populations. Questions concerned species present, the impact of commercial fishing on spawning aggregations and the different suites of groupers at different locations.

### **Working Group Reports**

#### **Cruise Ships**

Nancy Klingener characterized the first meeting of the group as organizational and said that due to the Navy’s intention of increasing its use of the Outer Mole, that it should be referred to as a ‘large vessel working group’. It was clarified by group members that there is no intent to limit vessel access to Key West Harbor, rather to investigate impacts and mitigation.

#### **Bait Fishing**

No group has formed since the last Council meeting and no meeting has taken place. Discussion among Council members indicated continued interest in the issue, with a specific request from Deborah Shaw that the ecological implications of removing bait fish from SPAs be given consideration in the future.

### **Fishing Guides Request for No-Motor Zone on Flats in Front of Vaca Cut, Marathon – Richard Grathwohl**

Mr. Grathwohl explained that boater impact over the years has driven bonefish away from this area during the winter and passed a map around to Council members indicating the desired area for designation. Chair Neugent suggested that since the area falls within 1200ft of shore, the City of Marathon is the appropriate regulatory authority. Mr. Causey said that if the City of Marathon applied this by ordinance, then the FKNMS can enforce that ordinance through the designation of a wildlife management area. He clarified that any agency with sworn law enforcement certification can enforce the ordinance and that the process is simplified for enforcement by the installation of visible markers. Debra Harrison expressed concern that the Council be the first body to debate the feasibility of the project, before public support is enlisted and proposed a motion. Members debated whether the recommendation should be a no-motor zone or a wildlife management area and after additional concerns were expressed by Wayne Blevins concerning local politics, discussion focused on user-group conflict and the responsibilities of the Council toward protecting Sanctuary resources and Ms Harrison withdrew her motion. All members concurred that the support of local governments and both commercial and recreational fishermen is necessary in the implementation of these management tools and that dealing with them should be done in a Sanctuary-wide manner, not case-by-case.

### **Conch Certificate**

Chair Neugent presented Billy Causey a Conch Certificate for his granddaughter, Julianna Kate Maratz.

### **Public Comment**

There was no Public Comment.

### **Downstream Effects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Introduction and History – Billy Causey (NOAA)**

Mr. Causey gave the attached Power Point presentation, in which he outlined the scale and timeframe of degradation to both the terrestrial and marine environments of South Florida since development, dredging and canalizing began in the early twentieth century, culminating in the collapse of Florida Bay in 1993. Pressure from the Sanctuary Advisory Council and environmental groups resulted in the creation of a federal task force, whose early realization that quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water flow through the Everglades system is essential to habitat restoration, and led to the development of the CERP. Using tracking data from Dr. Tom Lee of the University of Miami, he demonstrated the currents, flows and gyres that link the region, from Shark River Slough through the Tortugas Gyre to the Florida Current that are monitored extensively within the Sanctuary. He indicated that this inter-connectivity means that any hydrological changes in the Everglades impact Florida Bay, the Florida Keys and the Florida reef tract. Any return to the original sheet flow conditions can only be beneficial to the downstream components of the system. Mr. Causey emphasized that one of the key tenets of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration is that hydrologic restoration is a necessary starting point for ecological restoration and without significant engineering

modifications to the current water management system in place, many more endemic species will be lost. As important, however, is the quality of the water being redistributed. Although significant progress has been made with the science and effective management of the project, other than Kissimmee River restoration and West Palm Beach canal, most of it has not yet happened.

**Water Management and Its Impacts on Florida Bay: Refocusing on downstream effects – Dr. Jerry Lorenz (Audubon of Florida)**

Dr. Lorenz gave the attached Power Point presentation using roseate spoonbills and sheepheads as indicator species, to monitor the effects over long time periods of water management policies disrupting the natural flow of freshwater from the Everglades into Florida Bay. He meticulously documented the need for variation in water levels and salinity through time to maintain viable populations, particularly given the degree of human disturbance to habitat in the Florida Keys.

**Environment and Policy – Shannon Estenoz (WWF Everglades Program)**

Ms. Estenoz said that technologically and scientifically the CERP is in a position to restore some historical hydrological patterns and habitat in the Everglades, but that the political reality stops this going forward, due to competing special interest groups. She noted that a major challenge is that, although Florida Bay still has the same hydrological needs as before major landscape modification, the catchment area of the Everglades has been reduced to a half of its historical size, and that therefore every parcel of land is critical to restoration and reclamation. She encouraged residents of the Florida Keys to become engaged in the 8.5 Square Mile Area issue.

**Water Quality Issues – Mary Barley (Everglades Foundation)**

Ms. Barley emphasized the need for the people of the Florida Keys to become engaged in mainland water management issues, particularly when there is apparent conflict of interest, especially with the Experimental Agricultural Area, the 8.5 Square Mile Area and the Tamiami Trail. She urged meeting attendees to develop a dialogue with the stakeholders of those areas.

Discussion followed led by Mr. Blevins, about the amount of information available to residents of the Florida Keys concerning Everglades restoration projects and their downstream impacts, and the ease of access to that information.

Nancy Klingener, after further discussion among members, and revision of the language, moved to recommend to the Sanctuary Superintendent of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, that he communicate to the Working Group of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, that meetings where decisions are being made on the Florida Bay/Florida Keys Feasibility Study and the Florida Keys Tidal Restoration Study, as projects within CERP, be held in Monroe County, Florida, where the people are affected by those projects. The motion was seconded by Debra Harrison and upon roll call vote was unanimously approved.

Nancy Klingener moved, upon amendment by Ms. Harrison and John Hunt, to recommend to the Superintendent that he convey the message to the Working Group that when the Army Corps of Engineers holds a public hearing on C111, the L31 project, Decomartmentalization and other related projects that directly impact the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, a corresponding public hearing is held in the Keys, so that people of the Keys can be informed of projects that have such important downstream effects. The motion was seconded by Mr. Blevins and passed unanimously upon voice vote.

Discussion concerning phosphorus levels entering Florida Bay from the mainland recommended by Secretary Struhs followed, and Ms Andrews clarified that it is ten parts per billion.

Debra Harrison moved to recommend that the Superintendent share with members of the Everglades Restoration Committee the importance and significance of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary as part of the ecosystem. The motion was seconded by Mr. Blevins and passed unanimously upon voice vote.

Ms Harrison moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council establish a South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group to monitor and to respond to the impact of restoration and critical projects to the health of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and waters outside of the Sanctuary that are affecting the resources within the Sanctuary. The motion was seconded by Mr. Blevins and passed unanimously upon voice vote. A sign-up sheet for the Working Group was circulated and a list of members is attached.

### **Elkhorn Coral Disease in the Florida Keys – Dr. James Porter (University of Georgia)**

Dr. Porter presented data from the attached paper published by the National Academy of Sciences, June 19, 2002, entitled ‘ The etiology of white pox, a lethal disease of the Caribbean elkhorn coral *Acropora palmata*’, lead author Kathryn L. Patterson (University of Georgia) *et al.* He described the process by which the scientists linked an enterobacterium, *Serratia marcescens*, from the human gut, to white pox disease in elkhorn coral in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and discussed the impact of diseases on the reef system compared with other stressors. Wide ranging discussion followed, concerning possible origins of the pathogen in the marine system, specificity of infection, recovery rates, distribution of the disease within the Caribbean and the overall effect of raised temperatures on the health of the reef system.

**Items for the August 20, 2002 Agenda**

- Water Quality Discussion
- New Membership
- Wellwood Restoration
- Goals and Priorities.
- Mosquito Control
- Marine Reserves

The meeting was adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Submitted by,

Fiona Wilmot